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THE MYTHOLOGIES OF ANCIENT MEXICO AND PERU

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By
LEWIS SPENCE

LONDON
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE & CO LTD
1907

Edinburgh : T. and A. Constable, Printers to His Majesty

FOREWORD

It is difficult to understand the neglect into which the study of the Mexican and Peruvian mythologies has fallen. A zealous host of interpreters are engaged in the elucidation of the mythologies of Egypt and Assyria, but, if a few enthusiasts in the United States of America be excepted, the mythologies of the ancient West have no following whatsoever. That this little book may lead many to a fuller examination of those profoundly interesting faiths is the earnest hope of one in whose judgment they are second in importance to no other mythological system. By a comparative study of the American mythologies the student of other systems will reap his reward in the shape of many a parallel and many an elucidation which otherwise would escape his notice; whilst the general reader will introduce himself into a sphere of the most fascinating interest—the interest in the attitude towards the eternal verities of the peoples of a new and isolated world.

L. S.

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THE MYTHOLOGIES OF ANCIENT MEXICO AND PERU

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN OF AMERICAN RELIGIONS

The question of the origin of the religions of ancient Mexico and Peru is unalterably associated with that of the origin of the native races of America themselves—not that the two questions admit of simultaneous settlement, but that in order to prove the indigenous nature of the American mythologies it is necessary to show the extreme improbability of Asiatic or European influence upon them, and therefore of relatively late foreign immigration into the Western Hemisphere. As regards the vexed question of the origin of the American races it has been thought best to relegate all proof of a purely speculative or legendary character to a chapter at the end of the book, and for the present to deal with data concerning the trustworthiness of which there is little division of opinion.

The controversy as to the manner in which the American continent was first peopled is as old as its discovery. For four hundred years historians and antiquarians have disputed as to what race should have the honour of first colonising the New World. To nearly every nation ancient and modern has been credited the glory of peopling the two Americas; and it is only within comparatively recent years that any reasonable theory has been advanced in connection with the subject. It is now generally admitted that the peopling of the American continent must have taken place at a period little distant to the original settlement of man in Europe. The geological epoch generally assumed for the human settlement of America is the Pleistocene (Quaternary) in some of its interglacial conditions; that is, in some of the recurrent periods of mildness during the Great Ice Age. There is, however, a possibility that the continent may have been peopled in Tertiary times. The first inhabitants were, however, not of the Red Man type.

Difficult as is this question, an even more difficult one has to be faced when we come to consider the affinities of the races from whom the Red Man is descended. It must be remembered that at this early epoch in the history of man-

kind in all likelihood the four great types of humanity were not yet fully specialised, but were only differentiated from one another by more or less fundamental physiological characteristics. That the Indians of America are descended from more than one human type is proved by the variety of shapes exhibited in their crania, and it is safe to assume that both Europe and Asia were responsible for these early progenitors of the Red Man. At the period in question the American continent was united to Europe by a land-bridge which stretched by way of Greenland, Iceland, and the Faröe Islands to Northern Europe, and from the latter area there probably migrated to the western continent a portion of that human type which has been designated the Proto-European—precursors of that race from which was finally evolved the peoples of modern Europe.

When we come to the question of the settlement of America from the Asiatic side we can say with more certainty that immigration proceeded from that continent by way of Behring Strait, and was of a Proto-Mongolian character, though the fact should not be lost sight of that within a few hundred miles of the point of emigration there still exists the remains of an almost purely Caucasian type in the Ainu of Saghalien and the

Kurile Islands. However, immigration on any extensive scale must have been discontinued at a very early period, as on the discovery of America the natives presented a highly specialised and distinctive type, and bear such a resemblance one nation to another, as to draw from all authorities the conclusion that they are of common origin.

According to all known anthropological standards the Amerind (as it has been agreed to designate the American Indian) bears a close affinity to the Mongolian races of Asia, and it must be admitted that the most likely origin that can be assigned to him is one in which Asiatic, or to be more exact, Mongolian blood preponderates. The period of his emigration, which probably spread itself over generations, was in all likelihood one at which the Mongolian type was not yet so fully specialised as not to admit of the acquirement under specific conditions of very marked structural and physiological attributes.[1] In recent years large numbers of Japanese have settled in Mexico, and in the native dress can hardly be distinguished from the Mexican peasants.

Of course it would be unsafe to assume that,

[1] The fact of the rapid approximation of the European colonists to the American type might, however, be quoted against this view.

once settled in the Western Hemisphere, its populations were subject to none of those fluctuations or race-changes which are so marked a feature in the early history of European and Asiatic peoples. It is thought, and with justice, that some such race-movement convulsed the entire northern division of the continent at a period comparatively near to that of the Columbian discovery. Aztec history insists upon a prolonged migration for the race which founded the Mexican Empire, and native maps are still extant in several continental collections, which depict the routes taken by the Aztec conquerors from Aztlan, and the Toltecs from Tlapallan, their respective fatherlands in the north, to the Mexican Tableland. This, at least, would appear to be worthy of notice: that the 'Skraelings' or native Americans mentioned in the accounts of the tenth-century Norse discoverers of America, by the description given of them, do not appear to be the same race as that which inhabited the New England States upon their rediscovery.

As regards the origin of the American mythologies it is difficult to discover traces of foreign influence in the religion of either Mexico or Peru. At the time of their subjugation by the Spaniards legends were ripe in both countries of beneficent

white and bearded men, who brought with them a fully developed culture. The question of Asiatic influences must not altogether be cast aside as an untenable theory; but it is well to bear in mind that such influences, did they ever exist, must have been of the most transitory description, and could have left but few traces upon the religion of the peoples in question. If any such contact took place it was merely of an accidental nature, and, when speaking of faiths carried from Asia into America at the period of its original settlement, it is first necessary to premise that Pleistocene Man had already arrived at that stage of mental development in which the existence of supernatural beings is recognised—a premise with which modern anthropology would scarcely find itself in agreement.

Almost exhaustive proof of the wholly indigenous nature of the American religions is offered by the existence of the ruins of the large centres of culture and civilisation which are found scattered through Yucatan and Peru. These civilisations preceded those of the Aztecs and Incas by a very considerable period, how long it is impossible in the present state of our knowledge of the subject to say. These huge, buried cities, the Ninevehs and Thebeses of the West, have left

not even a name, and of the peoples who dwelt in them we are almost wholly ignorant. That they were of a race cognate with the Aztecs and Toltecs appears probable when we take into account the similarity of design which their architecture bears to the later ruins of the Aztec structure. Yet there is equally strong evidence to the contrary. At what epoch in the history of the world these cities were erected it would at the present time be idle to speculate. The recent discovery of a buried city in the Panhandle region of Texas may throw some light upon this question, and indeed upon the dark places of American archæology as a whole. In the case of the buried cities of Uxmal and Palenqüe a great antiquity is generally agreed upon. Indeed one writer on the subject goes so far as to place their foundation at the beginning of the second Glacial Epoch! He sees in these ruins the remnants of a civilisation which flourished at a time when men, fleeing from the rigours of the glacial ice-cap, huddled for warmth in the more central parts of the earth. It is unnecessary to state that this is a wholly preposterous theory, but the fact that the ruins of Palenqüe are at the present time lost in the depths of a tropic forest goes far to prove their great antiquity.

Arguing, then, from this antiquity, we may be justified in assuming that in these now buried cities the mythology of Mexico was partly evolved; that it was handed down to the Aztec conquerors who entered the country some four hundred years before its subjugation by Cortes, and that it received additions from the tribal deities. In the case of the Peruvian mythology we may argue a similar evolution, which, as we shall see later, had been spread over a considerably shorter period.

CHAPTER II

MEXICAN MYTHOLOGY

THE Mexican Empire at the period of its conquest by Cortes had arrived at a standard of civilisation comparable with that of those dynasties which immediately preceded the rule of the Ptolemies in Egypt. The government was an elective monarchy, but princes of the blood alone were eligible for royal honours. A complex system of jurisdiction prevailed, and a form of district and family government was in vogue which was somewhat similar to that of the Anglo-Saxons. In the arts a high state of perfection had been reached, and the Aztec craftsman appears to have been a step beyond the slavish conventionalism of the ancient Egyptian artist. In architecture the Mexicans were highly skilled, and their ability in this respect aroused the wonder of their Spanish conquerors, who, however, did not hesitate to raze to the ground the splendid

edifices they professed so much to admire. As road-builders and constructors of aqueducts they chiefly excelled, and a perfect system of posts was established on each of the great highways of the empire.

With the Aztecs the art of writing took the form of hieroglyphs, which in some ways resembled those of the ancient Egyptians; but they had not at the period of their conquest by Cortes evolved a more convenient and cursive method, such as the hieratic or demotic scripts employed in the Nile valley. In astronomical science they were surprisingly advanced and exact. The system in use by them was wonderfully accurate. It is, however, quite erroneous to suppose that it has affinities with any Asiatic system. They divided the year into eighteen periods of twenty days each, adding five supplementary days, and providing for intercalation every half-century. Each month contained four weeks of five days each, and each of the months had a distinct name. That the Aztecs were possessed of exact astronomical instruments cannot be proved; but in the thirteenth plate of Dupaix's *Monuments* (Part II.) there is a representation of a man holding to his face an instrument which might or might not

be a telescope.[1] The astronomical dial was certainly in use among them, and astrology, and divination in its every shape were frequently resorted to.

In the manual arts the Aztecs were far advanced. Papermaking was in a moderate state of perfection, and the dyeing, weaving, and spinning of cotton were crafts in which they excelled. Feather-work of supreme beauty was a staple article of manufacture, but in the metallic arts the absence of iron had to be compensated for by an alloy of copper, siliceous powder, and tin—an admixture by the use of which the hardest granite was cut and shaped, and the most beautiful gold and silver ornaments fashioned. Sharp tools were also made from obsidian, and in the barbers' shops of the city of Mexico razors of the same stone were in use.

To the art of war the Aztecs—a military nation who won and held all they possessed by force of arms—attached great importance. Training in the army was rigorous, and the knowledge of tactics displayed appears to have been very considerable.

[1] It must be borne in mind that the science and arts of the Aztecs were almost immediately lost in consequence of the intolerance of the Spanish Conquistadores.

Although the Aztecs had founded and adopted from other nations a complete pantheon of their own, they were strongly influenced by the ancient sun and moon worship of Central America. *Ometecutli* (twice Lord) and *Omecihuatl* (twice Lady) were the names which they bestowed upon these luminaries, and they were probably the first deities known to the Aztecs upon their emergence from a condition of totemism. The sun was the *teotl, the* god of the Mexicans, but it will be seen in the course of this chapter that the national deities and those acquired by the Aztecs in their intercourse with the surrounding peoples of Tezcuco and Tlacopan somewhat obscured the worship of those elementary gods.

Through all the confusion of a mythology second only in richness to those of Egypt and Hellas can be traced the idea of a supreme creator, a 'god behind the gods.' This was not the sun, but an Allfather, addressed by the Mexican nations as 'the God by whom we live'; 'omnipotent, that knoweth all thoughts, and giveth all gifts'; 'invisible, incorporeal, one God, of perfect perfection and purity.' The universality of this great being would seem (as in other mythologies) to have led to the deification of his attributes, and thus we have a pantheon in which we

can trace all the various attributes of an anthropomorphic deity. This subdivision of the deity was not, however, responsible for all the gods embraced by the Mexican pantheon. Many of these were purely national gods—and two at least had probably been raised to this rank from a condition of symbolic totemism during a period of national expansion and military success.

Such a god was the Mexican Mars, Huitzilopochtli, a name which signifies 'Humming-bird on the left,' a designation concerning the exact derivation of which there is considerable difference of opinion. The general explanation of this peculiar name is that it may have arisen from the fact that the god is usually represented as having the feathers of a humming-bird on the left foot. Before attempting an elucidation of the name, however, it will be well to examine the myth of Huitzilopochtli.

Huitzilopochtli was the principal tribal deity of the Aztecs. Another, though evidently less popular name applied to him, was Mextli, which signifies 'Hare of the Aloes.' Indeed a section of the city of Mexico derived its name from this appellation. The myth concerning his origin is one the peculiar features of which are common to many nations. His mother, Coatlicue or Coatlantona

(she-serpent), a devout widow, on entering the Temple of the Sun one day for the purpose of adoring the deity, beheld a ball of brightly coloured feathers fall at her feet. Charmed with the brilliancy of the plumes, she picked it up and placed it in her bosom with the intention of making an offering of it to the sun-god. Soon afterwards she was aware of pregnancy, and her children, enraged at the disgrace, were about to put her to death when her son Huitzilopochtli was born, grasping a spear in his right hand and a shield in his left, and wearing on his head a plume of humming-bird's feathers. On his left leg there also sprouted the flights of the humming-bird, whilst his face and limbs were barred with stripes of blue. Falling upon the enemies of his mother he speedily slew them. He became the leader of the Aztec nation, and after performing on its behalf prodigies of valour, he and his mother were translated to heaven, where she was assigned a place as the Goddess of Flowers.

The Müllerism of fifteen or twenty years ago would have assigned unhesitatingly the legend of Huitzilopochtli to that class of myths which have their origin in natural phenomena. In the *Hibbert Lectures* for 1884, M. Réville, the French religionist, professes to see in the Mexican war-

god the offspring of the sun and the 'spring florescence.' Mr. Tylor (*Primitive Culture*) calls Huitzilopochtli an 'inextricable compound parthenogenetic deity.' A more satisfactory solution of the myth would seem to the present writer to be that the origin of Huitzilopochtli was partly totemic—that, in fact, the humming-bird was the original totem of the wandering tribe of Aztecs prior to their descent upon Anahuac. The humming-bird is of an extremely pugnacious disposition, and will not hesitate to attack birds considerably larger than itself. This courage would appeal to a warlike tribe bent on conquest, and its adoption as a totem and as a standard in the wars of the Aztecs would naturally follow. This standard was known as the *Huitziton* or *Paynalton*, the 'little humming-bird' or 'little quick one,' and was a miniature of Huitzilopochtli borne by the priests in front of the soldiers in battle. This totem, then, took rank as the national war-god of the Aztecs. The commerce of the mortal woman with the animal is common to many legends of a totemic origin, as may be witnessed in the myths of many of the present-day American Indian tribes who believe their ancestors to have been the progeny of bears or wolves and mortal women, or as many

Norse and Celtic families in Early Britain believed themselves to be able to trace a similar ancestry.

However, Huitzilopochtli had a certain solar connection. He had three annual festivals, in May, August, and December. At the last of these festivals, an image of him was modelled in dough, kneaded with the blood of sacrificed children, and this was pierced by the presiding priest with an arrow, in token that the sun had been slain, and was dead for a season. The totem had, in fact, become confounded with the sun-god, the deity of the older and more cultured races of Anahuac, who had been adopted by the Aztecs on their settlement there. The myth had, in fact, to be revised in the light of the later adoption of a solar cultus; so that here as in so many of the myths of other lands we find an amicable blending of rival beliefs which have been almost insensibly fused one into another.

But another originally totemic deity had gained high rank in the Aztec pantheon. This was Tezcatlipoca, whose name signifies 'Shining Mirror.' He was the brother of Huitzilopochtli, and in this brotherhood may be discerned the twofold nature of the Huitzilopochtli legend. Tezcatlipoca was not the blood-brother of the

war-god of the Aztecs, but his brother in so far as he was connected with the sun. Tezcatlipoca, then, was the god of the cold season, and typified the dreary sun of that time of year. But he was also (probably as an afterthought) the God of Justice, in whose mirror the thoughts and actions of men were reflected. It seems probable to the present writer that Tezcatlipoca may originally, and in another clime, have been an ice-god. The facts which lead to this assumption are the period of his coming into power at the end of summer, and his possession of a shining mirror. Another of Tezcatlipoca's names signifies 'Night Wind.' He was evidently regarded also as the 'Breath of Life.' He may originally have been a wind demon of the prairies.

Tezcatlipoca's plaited hair was enclosed in a golden net, and from this plait was suspended an ear wrought in gold, towards which mounted a cloud of tongues, representative of the prayers of mankind. The ever-present nature of the 'Great Spirit' is also typified by Tezcatlipoca, who wandered invisible through the city of Mexico to observe the conduct of the inhabitants. That he might be enabled to rest during his tour of inspection, stone seats were placed for his reception at intervals in the streets. Need-

less to say no human being dared to occupy those benches.

But the most unique of all the gods of Mexico was Quetzalcoatl. This name indicates 'Feathered Serpent,' and the deity who owned it was probably adopted by the Aztecs upon their settlement in Mexico, called by them Anahuac. At all events, Quetzalcoatl stood for a worship which was eminently more advanced and humane than the degrading and sanguinary idolatry of which Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca were the prime objects. That he was not of Aztec origin but a god of the Toltecs or of the elder peoples who had preceded them in Anahuac is proved by a myth of the Mexican nations, in which his strife with Tezcatlipoca is related. Step by step Quetzalcoatl, the genius of Old Anahuac, resisted the inroads of the newcomers as represented by Tezcatlipoca. But he was forced to flee the country over which he had presided so long, and to embark on a frail boat on the ocean, promising to return at some future period. The Aztecs believed in and feared his ultimate return. He was not one of their gods. But in their terror of his vengeance and return they attempted to propitiate him by permitting his worship to flourish as a distinct caste side

by side with that of Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipoca.

Réville, writing in 'the mythical age,' as the decade of the 'eighties of last century has wittily been designated, sees in Quetzalcoatl the east wind, and quotes Sahagun to substantiate his theory.[1] But Quetzalcoatl was 'Lord of the Dawn.' In fine he was a culture-god, and was closely connected with the sun. It would be impossible in the space assigned to me to enter fully into an analysis of the origin of this most interesting figure. There is, however, reason to believe that Quetzalcoatl was one of those early introducers of culture who sooner or later find a place among the deities of the nation they have assisted in its early struggles towards civilisation. The strife between Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca, according to Réville, typifies the struggle between the wind and the cold and dry season. It is more probable that it typifies the strife between culture and barbarism. The same authority points out that it is Tezcatlipoca and not Huitzilopochtli who attacks Quetzalcoatl. But Tezcatlipoca was the god of austerity, and perhaps of the cold north, and thus the proper opponent of a luxurious

[1] An absolutely erroneous one.

southern civilisation. I have gone more fully into the question of the origin of Quetzalcoatl in the last chapter of this work, as a more prolonged consideration of the subject would be somewhat out of the scope of the present chapter.

The worship of Quetzalcoatl was antipathetic if not directly opposed to that of the other deities of Anahuac. It had a separate priesthood of its own who dressed in white in contradistinction to the sable garments which the priests of the other divinities were in the habit of wearing, and its ritual discountenanced if it did not forbid human sacrifice. Quetzalcoatl possessed a high priest of his own, who was subservient, however, to the Aztec pontiff, and who only joined the monarch's deliberative council on rare and extraordinary occasions. There can be no doubt that the good reception given to Cortes and the Spanish conquerors was solely on account of the Quetzalcoatl legend, which insisted upon his return at some future period, and the Aztecs undoubtedly regarded the arrival of the strange white men as a fulfilment of this prophecy.

Tlaloc was the god of rain—an important deity for a country where a droughty season was nothing less than a national disaster. His name signifies 'the nourisher,' and from his seat among

the mountains he despatched the rain-bearing clouds to water the thirsty and sun-baked plains of Anahuac. He was also the god of fertility or fecundity, and in this respect appears to have been analogous to the Egyptian Amsu or Khem, the ithyphallic deity of Panopolis. He was the wielder of the thunder and lightning, and the worship connected with him was even more cruel, if possible, than that of Huitzilopochtli. One-eyed and open-mouthed, he delighted in the sacrifice of children, and in seasons of drought hundreds of innocents were borne to his temple in open litters, wreathed with blossoms and dressed in festal robes. Should they weep, their tears were regarded as a happy augury for a rainy season; and the old Spanish chroniclers record that even the heartless Aztecs, used to scenes of massacre as they were, were moved to tears at the spectacle of the infants hurried, amid the wild chants of frenzied priests, to the maw of this Mexican Moloch.

The statues of Tlaloc were usually cut in a greenish-white stone to represent the colour of water. He had a wife, Chalchihuitlicue (the lady Chalchihuit), and by her he possessed a numerous family which are supposed to represent the clouds, and which bear the same name as him-

self. At one of his festivals the priests plunged into a lake, imitating the sounds and motions of frogs, which were supposed to be under the special protection of the water-god.

Xiuhtecutli (lord of fire), or Huehueteotl (the old god), was one of the most ancient of the Mexican deities. He is usually represented as typifying the nature of the element over which he had dominion, and in his head-dress of green feathers, his blackened face, and the yellow-feathered serpent which he carried on his back, the different colours observed in fire, as well as its sinuous and snake-like nature, are well depicted. Like Tezcatlipoca, he possessed a mirror, a shining disc of gold, to show his connection with the sun, from which all heat emanated, and to which all heat was subject. And here it will be well to remind the reader of the statement made near the commencement of this chapter that the god *par excellence*, the sun, was more or less manifested in all the principal deities of Anahuac; that in fact these deities *were* the sun in conjunction with some attribute of a totemic or naturalistic origin.

The first duty of an Aztec family when rising in the morning was to consecrate to Xiuhtecutli a piece of bread and a libation of drink. He was

thus analogous to Vulcan, who, besides being the creator of thunderbolts and conflagration, was also the divinity of the domestic hearth. Once a year the fire in every Mexican house was extinguished, and was rekindled by friction before the statue of Xiuhtecutli by his priests.

The two principal goddesses of the Aztecs were Centeotl, the maize-goddess, the Ceres of Mexico, and Tlazolteotl, the goddess of love. The name Centeotl is derived from centli (maize) and teotl (divinity), and is often confounded with that of her son, who bore the same name. Like the Virgin or the Egyptian Hes, she bears in her arms a child, who is the young maize, who afterwards grows to bearded manhood. Centeotl was the goddess of sustenance, and was often represented as a many-uddered frog, to typify the food-yielding soil. Her daughter, Xilonen, was the tender ear of the maize. Appalling sacrificial rites were celebrated in connection with the worship of this goddess, in which women were the principal victims. These are dealt with in the chapter on ritual and ceremonial.

Tlazolteotl, the goddess of love, or, more correctly, of sensuality, was the object concerning whom the deities of the Aztec Olympus waged a terrible war. Her abode was a lovely garden,

where she dwelt surrounded by musicians and merrymakers, dwarfs and jesters. At one time she had been the spouse of Tlaloc, the rain-god, but had eloped with Tezcatlipoca, and thus she probably represents nature, who in one season espouses the rain-god and in another the god of the cold season. The myths concerning Tlazolteotl are most unsavoury, and consist chiefly of tales concerning her seductive prowess.

Mictlan was the Mexican Pluto. The name signifies 'Country of the North'—the region of waste and hunger and death, and was used both of the place and the deity. There, surrounded by fearful demons (Tzitzimitles), he ruled over the shades of the departed much as did Pluto, and, like his classical prototype, he possessed a consort, or rather consorts, since he had several wives. The representations of him naturally give to him a most repulsive aspect, and he is usually depicted in the act of devouring his victims.

The minor gods of the Aztecs were legion —indeed various authorities estimate their numbers from two hundred and sixty to two thousand—and of these it will only be possible to deal with a few of the more important.

Ixtlilton (brown one) was the god of healing,

and was analogous to Æsculapius. The priests connected with his worship vended a liquor which purported to be a sort of 'cure-all.' Xipe (the bald) was the tutelar deity of goldsmiths. He was, in reality, a form of Huitzilopochtli, and probably indicated the idea that gold had some connection with the sun. Mixcoatl (cloud serpent) was the spirit of the waterspout, and was propitiated rather than worshipped by the semi-savage mountaineers in the vicinity of Mexico. Omacatl (double reed) was the god or spirit of mirth and festival. Yacatecutli (guiding lord) was the god of travellers and merchants. Indeed the commercial class among the Aztecs were more exact concerning his worship than in that of almost any other of their deities. His symbol was the staff usually carried by the people of the country when on a journey, and this stick was an object of veneration among travellers, who usually prayed to it as representative of the god when evening brought their day's march to a close.

The Tepitoton, or diminutive deities, were household gods of the lares and penates type, and were probably connected with a species of Shamanism, the origin of which may either have been prior to or contemporary with the

adoption of the worship of the greater gods. Their existence might appear to suggest the presence of fetishism in the Aztec religion, but the theory of a Shamanistic origin for these household deities seems the more likely one.

CHAPTER III

THE PRIESTHOOD AND RITUAL OF THE ANCIENT MEXICANS

The resemblance of the Mexican priesthood to that of Ancient Egypt was very marked. However, the influence of the priests among the people of Anahuac was even greater than that of the analogous caste among the people of Khemi. Their system of conventual education permitted them to impress their doctrines upon the minds of the young in that indelible manner which secures unfaltering adhesion in later life to the dogmas so inculcated; and no doubt the ever-present fear of human sacrifice assisted them mightily in their dealings with the people. In short, they were all-powerful, and the Mexican, accustomed to their influence from the period of childhood to that of death, submitted unquestioningly to their rule in all things, spiritual and temporal.

The religious ethics of the Mexican priesthood

were lofty and sublime in the extreme, and had but little in common with their barbarous practices. They had been borrowed from the more cultured Toltecs, who during their sole tenure of Anahuac had evolved a moral code to which it would be difficult to take exception. But although this exalted philosophy had been adopted by the fierce and uncultured Aztecs, it had become so obscured by the introduction of cruel and inhuman rites and customs as to be almost no longer recognisable as the pure faith of the race they had succeeded in the land. The germ and core of the Aztec religion was the idea of the constant necessity of propitiating the gods by means of human sacrifice, and to this aspect of their religion we will return later.

We have already seen that underlying the mythology of the ancient Mexicans was the idea of a supreme Being, a 'Great Spirit.' In the rites of confession and absolution particularly was this Being appealed to in prayer, and the similarity of these petitions to those offered up by themselves so impressed the monkish companions of the Spanish conquerors that their astonishment is very evident in their writings. It is unlikely that these priests would admit a soul of goodness in the evil thing it was their

business to stamp out; and their testimony in this respect is of the highest value as evidence that the Aztec Religion possessed at least the germ of the eternal verities.

The Aztecs believed that eternity was broken up into several distinct cycles, each of several thousand years' duration. There would seem to have been four of these periods, concerning the length and nature of which the old Spanish writers on the subject differ very materially. The conclusion of each was (according to the Mexican tradition) to witness the extinction of humanity in one mighty holocaust, and the blotting out of the sun in the heavens. Whether this universal upheaval applied only to the sons of men, or, like the Teutonic Gotterdämmerung, or the Scandinavian Rägnarok, had an equal significance for the gods, is not clear. It is worth remarking, however, that it premises the mortal nature of the sun, and, therefore, the existence of a creative agency with the ability to set another sun in its place.

With the Mexicans the question of a future life was a very nebulous one, though perhaps no more so than with the ancient Greeks or Romans. There was more than one paradise. Mictlan, the shadowy sombre place of the dead, was the resting-place of the majority, for the Aztecs fully

believed that the higher realms of bliss were preserves for the aristocracy where the lowly might not enter. And this, in passing, is perhaps an explanation of the marvellously speedy adoption of Christianity by the Mexican natives subsequent to the conquest of Anahuac. Of the higher realms of bliss the 'Mansion of the Sun' was perhaps the most desirable. There the principal pleasures consisted in accompanying the sun in his course, and the amusement of choral dancing. Souls in this paradise might also enter the bodies of humming-birds, and flit from flower to flower. The exercise of the chase lent to this place something of the character of a Valhalla, and we hear something of Gargantuan banquets. Here, too, the blessed might animate the clouds, and float deliciously over the world they had quitted.

The paradise of Tlaloc was the special dwelling of those who had lost their lives by drowning, of sacrificed children, and of those who had died of disease caused by damp or moisture. But two exceptions were made as regarded the souls of others, and these related to warriors slain in battle, and women who had died in child-bed, who were permitted to enter paradise as having forfeited their lives in the service of the state.

All the science and wisdom of the country was embodied in the priestly caste. The priests understood the education of the people, and so forcibly impressed their students with their knowledge of the occult arts that for the rest of their lives they quietly submitted to priestly influence. The priestly order was exceedingly numerous, as is proved by the fact that no less than five thousand functionaries were attached to the great temple of Mexico, the rank and offices of whom were apportioned with the most minute exactitude. The basis of the priesthood was eminently aristocratic, and its supreme pontiff was known by the appellation of *Mexicatl Teohuatzin*, or 'Mexican Lord of Divine Matters.' Next in rank to him was the high priest of Quetzalcoatl, whose authority was limited to his own priesthood, and who lived a life of strict seclusion, not unlike that of the Grand Lama of Tibet. This was probably a remnant of old Toltec practice. The pontiff seems to have wielded a very considerable amount of political power, and to have had a seat on the royal council.

The life of an Aztec priest was rigorous in the extreme. Fasting and penance bulked largely among his duties, and the idea of the implacability of the gods which was current in the

priesthood appears to have driven many priests to great extremes of self-inflicted torture. They dressed entirely in black (with the exception of the caste of Quetzalcoatl, who were clothed in white), and their cloaks covered their heads, falling down at each side like a mantilla. Their hair was permitted to grow very long. They bathed every evening at sunset, and rose several times during the night for the purpose of paying their devotions. Some of their orders permitted marriage, while others were celibate, but all, without distinction, passed an existence of severe asceticism. As has been said, departmental duties were strongly marked. Some were readers, others musicians, while others again, probably the lower orders, attended to the sacred fires, and the more menial offices, the grand duty of human sacrifice devolving upon the higher orders of the prelacy alone.

There was also an order of females who were admitted to the practice of all the sacerdotal functions, omitting only that of human sacrifice. These appear to have been more of the description of nuns than of priestesses. Fakirs and religious beggars also abounded, but these seem to have taken upon themselves mendicant vows for a space only.

Education was wholly sacerdotal. That is, though secular studies were communicated to the young, the principal part of their training consisted of religious instruction. The schools were situated in the temple precincts, and entering these at an early age the boys were instructed by priests, and the girls by nuns. They resided within the temple buildings, and those who did not, and who probably consisted of the lower orders, were enrolled in a society called the *Telpochtiliztli*, which met every evening at sunset to perform choral dances in honour of Tezcatlipoca. A secondary school also existed, called the *Calmecac*, in which the lore of the priests and the reading of the hieroglyphs, astrology, and the kindred sciences were taught the young men, whilst the girls became experts in the weaving of costly garments for the adornment of the idols, and the wear of the higher orders of the hierarchy.

When the boys and girls left the school at the age of fifteen they were either sent back to their families, or to public service, to which they were often recommended by the priests. Others remained to become in their turn priests or nuns in different convents.

Severe educational tests were required for

entrance into the priesthood, and grades were many. The priests, we have seen, might occupy one of several ranks, and the nuns could become abbesses, or merely retain the position of simple sisters, according to their ambition and abilities. The lower ranks were designated *Cihuaquaquilli*, or 'lady herb-eaters,' while the higher orders were known as *Cihuatlamacasque*, or 'lady deaconesses.'

The Spanish conquerors of Mexico were astonished to find among this peculiar people a number of rites which appeared in many respects analogous to some of those practised by Catholics. Such were the use of the cross as a symbol, communion, baptism, and confession. The cross, which was designated, strangely enough, 'Tree of our Life,' was merely the symbol of the four winds, which were indeed the life of Anahuac. As regards confession and absolution, these were permitted to a person only once in his existence, and that at a late period of life, as any repetition of the pardoned offence was held to be inexpiable. Penance was apportioned, and absolution given much in the same manner as in the Roman Catholic Church. There appears to have been more than one kind of communion. At the third festival of Huitzilopochtli they made an image of him in

dough kneaded with the blood of infants, and divided the pieces among themselves. In the case of Xiuhtecutli a similar image was placed on the top of a tree, which, like our Christmas trees, had been transported from the forest to the town, and when the tree was thrown down and the image broken, the people scrambled for the pieces, which they devoured.

In the rite of baptism the principal functionary was the midwife. She touched the mouth and breast of the infant with water in the presence of the assembled relations, and invoked the blessing of the goddess Cihuatcoatl, who presided over childbirth (and who was a variant of Centeotl, the maize-goddess) upon it. But it is unlikely that she did so in the devoutly Christian language ascribed to her by Sahagun.

At death the corpse of a Mexican was dressed in the robes peculiar to his guardian deity, and in this can be perceived an analogy to every dead Egyptian becoming an Osirian, or Osiris himself. Covered with paper charms, as the Egyptian mummy was covered with metal or faïence symbols, the body was cremated, the ashes placed in an urn, and preserved in the house of the deceased. At the death of a rich man many slaves were sacrificed to bear him company in the

world beyond the grave. This was obviously a meaningless survival of a prehistoric custom. Valuable treasures were often buried with the wealthy, and a rich man would often have his private chaplain sacrificed at his tomb to assist him with ghostly counsel and comfort in the other world.

Among the ancient Mexicans every month was consecrated to some particular deity, and in their calendar every day marked a celebration of some greater or lesser divinity. Those differed considerably in their character. Some were light and joyous, and their ritual abounded in the use of flowers and song. Others (and these, unhappily, were in the majority) were stained with the hideousness of human sacrifice.

The temples of the Ancient Mexicans were very numerous. They were called *teocallis*,[1] or 'houses of God,' and were constructed by facing huge mounds of earth with brick and stone. They were pyramidal in shape, and built in stages which grew smaller as the summit was reached. The bases of some of these teocallis were more than one hundred feet square. The great teocalli at Mexico, for example, was three hundred and seventy-five

[1] The temple, with all its purlieus and courts, was named *teopan*; the central pyramid, *teocalli*.

feet long at the base, and three hundred feet in width. Its height was over eighty feet. It consisted of five stages, each communicating with the other by means of a staircase which wound around the entire edifice. In the case of some teocallis, however, the staircase led directly up the western face of the building. At the top two towers, between forty and fifty feet in height, stood perched upon a broad area. Inside these were kept the idols of the gods to whom the teocalli was sacred. Before these towers stood the stone of sacrifice, and two altars upon which the fires blazed night and day. In the city of Mexico six hundred of these fires rendered any artificial illumination at night superfluous. Through the very construction of these temples all religious services were of a public nature. In front of the great teocalli of Mexico stretched a court twelve hundred feet square, around which clustered the chapels of minor deities, and those captured from conquered peoples, as well as the dwellings and offices set apart for the attendant priests.

Although it appears that the Toltecs, the forerunners of the Aztecs in Mexico, had at one period of their history been prone to human sacrifice, they had almost entirely discarded the practice

at the time of their downfall. Some two hundred years before the coming of the Spaniards the Aztecs had adopted this abomination, and were in the habit of sparing the lives of immense numbers of prisoners of war solely for the purpose of offering them up to the national gods. As their empire extended, these holocausts became greater and more common. On the teocalli of Mexico the Spaniards could count one hundred and thirty-six thousand human skulls piled in a horrid pyramid.

Of the sacrifices the most important was that signifying the annual demise of Tezcatlipoca. The most handsome of the captives who chanced to be in the hands of the Aztecs was chosen for the purpose. It was necessary that he should be without spot or blemish, as it was intended that he should represent Tezcatlipoca himself. He was taken in hand by a body of tutors, who instructed him how to play his allotted part with the dignity and grace to be expected from a divine being. Arrayed in magnificent robes typical of his godhead, and surrounded by an atmosphere of flowers and incense, he led the life of a voluptuary for the space of nearly a year. On the occasion of his appearance in the public streets he was received by the populace with all the homage due to a god, but was strictly guarded, nevertheless, by

eight pages, who in reality were merely gaolers. Within a month's time of his immolation four beautiful girls were given him as wives, and he was feasted and fêted by the nobility as the incarnation of Tezcatlipoca.

On the day preceding the sacrifice the victim was placed on one of the royal canoes, and accompanied by his four wives, was rowed to the other side of the lake. That evening his wives bade him farewell, and he was stripped of his gorgeous apparel. He was then conducted to a teocalli some three miles from the city of Mexico. In scaling this he threw away the wreaths of flowers with which he had been adorned, and broke in pieces the musical instruments with which he had amused his hours of captivity. Crowds thronged from the city to behold the act of sacrifice. On reaching the summit of the teocalli the victim was met by six priests, five of whom led him to the sacrificial stone, a great block of jasper with a convex surface. On this he was placed by the five priests, who secured his head, arms, and legs, whilst the officiating priest, robed in a blood-red mantle, dexterously opened his breast with a sharp flint knife. He then inserted his hand into the gaping wound, and tearing out the still palpitating heart, held it aloft towards the sun. Then

he cast the bleeding offering into a vessel containing burning copal, which lay at the feet of the image of Tezcatlipoca. A species of sermon was then delivered by one of the priests to the people in which he drew a moral from the fate of the victim illustrative of the inevitable conclusion of all human pleasure by the hand of death.

Huitzilopochtli had also a representative sacrificed every year who had to take part in a sort of war-dance immediately before his immolation, and a woman was annually sacrificed to Centeotl, the maize-goddess. Before her death she took part in several symbolic representations which were expressions of the various processes in the growth of the harvest. The day before her sacrifice she sowed maize in the streets, and on the arrival of midnight she was decapitated and flayed. A priest arrayed himself in the still warm skin and engaged in mimic combat with soldiers who were scattered through the streets. Part of the skin was then carried to the temple of Centeotl the Son, where a priest made a mask of it in the likeness of the presiding deity, and afterwards sacrificed four captives in honour of the occasion. The skin was then carried to the frontiers of the empire, and buried. It was supposed that its presence there acted as a talisman against invasion.

We have before described the sacrifices of children to Tlaloc. Even more gruesome were the awful doings at the festival of Xiuhtecutli, when the unhappy victims were half-roasted and finally despatched by having their hearts torn out. Cannibal feasts often followed these sacrifices—feasts which were the more horrible in that they were accompanied by all the accessories of a high standard of civilisation; but it must be remembered that their purport was essentially symbolic, and in no way partook of the nature of the orgies of flesh-famished savages.

When the great temple of Huitzilopochtli was dedicated in 1486, the chain of victims sacrificed on that occasion extended for the length of two miles. In this terrible massacre the hearts of no less than seventy thousand human beings were offered up! In the light of such appalling wickedness it is difficult to blame the Spanish conquerors of Anahuac in their zeal to blot out the worship of the deities whom they designated 'horrible demons.' These victims were nearly always captive warriors of rival nations, and it was on rare occasions only that native Mexicans were led to the stone of sacrifice unless, indeed, they were malefactors.

The great jubilee festival, which was cele-

brated every fifty-two years throughout the empire, marked the coincidence of four times thirteen solar and four times thirteen lunar years. This the Mexicans called a 'sheaf of years,' and when the first day of the fifty-third year dawned, the ceremony of *Toxilmolpilia*, or 'the binding-up of years,' was held. Priests and people gazed feverishly at the Pleiades to see if they would pass the zenith. Should they do so the world would hold on its course for another similar period; if not, extinction would instantly follow. Fire was kindled upon a victim's breast by the friction of wood, and whenever it was alight the prisoner's heart was plucked out, and along with his body was consumed upon a pile of wood kindled by the new fire. As the flames ascended, and it was seen that the Pleiades had crossed the zenith, cries of joy burst from the assembled people below. Faggots were lighted at the sacred pyre, and domestic fires rekindled from them. Humanity had been respited for a generation.

It is difficult to believe that a people so imbrued in a religion of bloodshed could have been punctilious in matters of morality, and it is still more difficult to believe the evidence of Sahagun and Clavigero concerning their personal

piety. It seems certain, however, that as a race the Aztecs were austerely moral, pious, truth-loving, and loyal as citizens, and even the sanguinary priests do not appear to have reaped any benefit from their terrible offices. All the evidence would seem to show that it was the belief in the existence of cruel and insatiable gods which rendered the priests and people alike callous and insensible to the taking of human life, and this is the more easily understood when it is remembered that the Aztecs had at a comparatively late period emerged from a state of migratory savagery into the heirship of an ancient and complex civilisation.[1]

[1] There is reason to believe, however, that the sacrifices of the Aztecs were made not so much for the purpose of placating the gods as for the imagined necessity of rejuvenating them and keeping them alive. Of some of the sacrifices, at least, this is certain.

CHAPTER IV

THE RELIGION OF THE ANCIENT PERUVIANS

The civilisation of the Ancient Peruvians, although in many ways analogous to that of the Aztecs, was strangely dissimilar in some of its aspects. The peoples of the two empires were totally unaware of each other's existence, and were divided by dense tracts of mountain, plain, and forest, where the most intense savagery prevailed. It seems probable that the Peruvian culture had its origin in the region of Lake Titicaca, and that it was of an indigenous character admits of little doubt. Like the Mexicans, the Peruvians had displaced an older civilisation and an older race. What was the nature of that civilisation, and thanks to what people it flourished, it is at present impossible to say. Scattered over the surface of the Peruvian slope are Cyclopean ruins, the sole remnants of the works of a more primeval people. These ruins are chiefly to be found in the neighbour-

hood of Lake Titicaca and Cuzco, the ancient metropolis of the Incas. Whatever may have been the architectural ability of this ancient people, the usurpers had little to learn from them in this respect, or, more strictly speaking, having borrowed their methods, continued faithful to them. The temples and mansions of the Peruvians were massive and handsome, but for the most part covered only with a thatch of Indian maize straw. They made long, straight, macadamised roads which they pushed with surprising engineering skill through tunnelled mountains, spanning seemingly impassable gorges with marvellously constructed bridges. The temples and the palaces of the Incas were adorned with gold and silver ornaments of fabulous value and skilful design. Sumptuous baths, supplied with hot and cold water by means of pipes laid in the earth, were to be found in the houses of the aristocracy, and a high state of comfort and luxury prevailed.

To describe the social polity of the Peruvians is to describe their religion, for the two were one and the same. The empire of Peru was the most absolute theocracy the world has ever seen, much more absolute, for example, than that of Israel under the Judges. The Inca was the direct repre-

sentative of the sun upon earth. He was the head, the very keystone of a socio-religious edifice to equal which in intricacy of design and organisation the entire history of man has no parallel to offer.

The Inca was the head of a colossal bureaucracy which had ramifications into the very homes of the people themselves. Thus after the Inca came the governors of provinces, who were of the blood-royal; then officials were placed above ten thousand families, a thousand families, a hundred, and even ten families, upon the principle that the rays of the sun enter everywhere. Personal freedom was a thing unknown. Each individual was under direct surveillance, as it were, branded and numbered like the herds of llamas which were the special property of the sun incarnate, the Inca. Rules and regulations abounded in a manner unheard of even in police-ridden Prussia, and no one had the opportunity in this vast social machine of thinking or acting for himself. His walk in life was marked out for him from the time he was five years of age, and even the woman he was to marry was selected for him by the responsible officials; the age at which he should enter the matrimonial state being fixed at not earlier than twenty-four years

in the case of a man and eighteen in that of a woman. Even the place of his birth was indicated by a coloured ribbon (which he dared not remove) tied round his head.

The Peruvian legend of the coming to earth of the sun-race, of whom the Inca was held to be the direct descendant, told how two beings, Manco Capac and Mama Ogllo or Oullo, the offspring of the Sun and Moon, descended from heaven in the region of Lake Titicaca. They had received commands from their parent, the sun-god, to traverse the country until they came to a spot where a golden wedge they possessed should sink into the ground, and at this place to found a culture-centre. The wedge disappeared at Cuzco, which Garcilasso el Inca de la Vega (the most important of the ancient chroniclers of Peru) interprets as meaning 'navel,' or, in twentieth-century idiom, 'Hub of the Universe,' but which possibly possesses a more exact rendering in the words 'cleared space.'

The city founded, Manco Capac instructed the men in the arts of civilisation, and his consort busied herself in teaching the women the domestic virtues, as weaving and spinning. Leaving behind them as earthly representatives their son and daughter, they reascended to heaven,

and from the children they left upon earth the race of Incas was said to have sprung. Thus it was that all Peruvian monarchs must marry their sisters, as it was not permissible to defile the offspring of the blood of the Son by mortal union—the breaking of which law assisted in the ruin of the Peruvian empire.

Like the Mexicans, the Peruvians appear to have acknowledged the existence of a Supreme Being. The attributes of this Supreme Being, through the fostering care of a special cultus, soon developed the rank of deities, each having a strongly marked identity.

The most important individual deities next to the Sun were Viracocha and Pachacamac, and these, curiously enough, were deities who had been admitted to the Peruvian pantheon from a still older faith.

The name Viracocha was, besides being the specific appellation of a certain deity, a generic name for divine beings. It signifies 'Foam of the Water,' thus alluding to the legend that the god had arisen out of the depths of Lake Titicaca. On his appearance from the sacred waters Viracocha created the sun, moon, and stars, and mapped out for them the courses which they were to hold in the heavens. He then created

men carved out of stone statues made by himself, and bade them follow him to Cuzco. Arrived there he collected the inhabitants, and placed over them one, Allca Vica, who subsequently became the ancestor of the Incas. He then returned into Lake Titicaca, into the waters of which he disappeared.

It is evident that this legend clashes strongly with that of the solar origin of the Incas, and it would seem to have been put forward by a rival priesthood which had survived the introduction of solar worship, but which was not powerful enough to combat it.

Viracocha was usually represented as a god bearded with water-rushes, and this hirsute adornment is so far significant in that it may have some connection with the older legends of the Peruvians which tell of a white and bearded race which advanced to Cuzco, the centre of civilisation, from the regions of Lake Titicaca. He is also spoken of as being without flesh or bone, yet swift in movement, and this description does not leave us long in doubt as to his real nature. He was the water-god, the fertiliser of all plant life. In the somewhat arid country surrounding Lake Titicaca that great body of water would undoubtedly come to be regarded as

the generator of all fertility to be found in its vicinity. Hence Viracocha's origin. His consort was his sister Cocha, the lake itself. He, like Tlaloc among the Mexicans, had a penchant for human sacrifice, but his worship was by no means so sanguinary as was that of his Mexican prototype.

We must then regard Viracocha as the god of a faith anterior to the sun-worship which obtained in Peru at the time of the Spanish conquest. But we shall also be forced to admit that Pachacamac (whose name we bracketed with that of Viracocha a few paragraphs back), although a member of the Peruvian pantheon and a great god, was but there on sufferance. The name Pachacamac signifies 'earth-generator,' and the primitive centres of the worship of this deity were in the valleys of Lurin and Rimac, near the city of Lima. In the latter once stood a great temple to Pachacamac, the ruins of which, alone, now remain. Pachacamac would seem to have borne the reputation of a great civiliser, and to some extent he usurped the claims of Viracocha to this honour. Viracocha, so runs the legend, was defeated by him in combat, and fled, whereupon the victor created a new world more to his liking by the simple expedient of transferring the race of men then upon earth into wild animals, and

creating a new and higher humanity. He was also a god of fertility, as on the remains of his temples fishes are to be found evidently symbolising this attribute.

The hostility of Pachacamac and Viracocha has a mythical significance. Pachacamac was the god of volcanoes, earthquakes, and subterranean fire, and was therefore hostile to water. His worship was much more mysterious than that of Viracocha. The Peruvians, in fact, regarded Pachacamac as a dreaded and unseen deity, at whose mutterings in the centre of the earth they prostrated themselves in dread. Rimac, indeed, where the worship of this god had its focus, means 'the speaker,' 'the murmurer,' and a kind of oracular character appears ultimately to have been associated with the name of this terrible deity, who on occasion demanded to be appeased by human sacrifice.

The myth of Pacari Tambo, the 'house of the dawn,' a legend of the Collas, a tribe of mountaineers dwelling to the south-west of Cuzco, throws some light on this strife between Viracocha and Pachacamac. Four brothers and sisters (runs the legend) issued one day from the caverns of Pacari Tambo. The eldest ascended a mountain, and cast stones to all the cardinal

points of the compass to show that he had taken possession of the land. The other three were averse to this, especially the youngest, who was the most cunning of all. By dint of persuasion he managed to get the obnoxious brother to enter a cave. As soon as he had done so he closed the mouth of the cave with a great stone, and imprisoned him there for ever. He then, on pretence of seeking his lost brother, persuaded the second to ascend a high mountain, from which he cast him, and, as he fell, by dint of magic art changed him into a stone. The third brother, having no desire to share the fate of the other two, then fled. The first brother appears to be the oldest religion, that of Pachacamac; the second, that of an intermediate fetishism, or stone worship; and the third, Viracocha. The fourth is the worship of the Sun, pure and simple, the youngest brother, but the victor over the other older faiths of the land. This is proved by the circumstance that the name applied to the youngest brother is Pirrhua Manca, an equivalent to that of Manco Capac, the Son of the Sun.

This, however, does not altogether tally with what might be called the 'official' legend, the myth promulgated by the Incas themselves. According to this the Sun had three sons, Vira-

cocha, Pachacamac, and Manco Capac. This stroke of policy at once blended all three religions; but by another stroke of politic genius, the earthly power was vested in Manco Capac, the other two deities being placed in subordinate positions, where they were concerned chiefly with the workings of nature. To Manco Capac, and his representatives, the Incas, alone, was left the dominion of mankind.

We will now pass to a consideration of the minor deities of the Peruvian mythology. These were numerous, and had been mostly evolved from nature forces and natural phenomena. Among the more important was Chasca, the planet Venus, the 'long-haired,' the 'Page of the Sun.' Cuycha, the rainbow, was the servant of the sun and moon. He was represented in a private chapel of his own, contiguous to that of the Sun, by large plates of gold so fired as to represent the various colours in the prismatic hues of the rainbow. Fire, also, was an object of profound veneration with the Peruvians, derived, as it was believed to be, from the sun. Its preservation was scrupulously attended to in the Temple of the Sun and in the House of the Virgins of the Sun, of which an account will be found in the next chapter.

Catequil was the god of thunder. He is

represented as possessing a club and sling, the latter evidently being intended to symbolise the thunderbolt. He was a servant of the Sun, and had three distinct forms—Chuquilla (thunder), Catuilla (lightning), and Intiallapa (thunderbolt). Temples were erected to him in which children and llamas were sacrificed at his altars. The Peruvians had, and still have, a great dread of thunder, and sought to pacify Catequil in every possible manner. Their children were sacred to him as the supposed offspring of the lightning.

We now descend gradually and almost insensibly in the scale of deism, until little by little we reach a condition of gross idolatry, not far removed from that still practised by many African tribes. Here we find even vegetables adored as symbols of sustenance. The potato was glorified under the appellation of acsumama, and the maize as saramama. Trees partook of divine attributes, and we seem to see in this condition of things a state analogous to the reverence paid by the early Greeks and Romans to Sylvanus and his train, and the vivification of trees by the presence within them of dryads.

Certain animals were treated with much reverence by the Peruvians. Thus we find the serpent, especially Urcaguay, the keeper of sub-

terranean gold, an object of great veneration. The condor or vulture of the Andes Mountains was the messenger or Mercury of the Sun, and he held the same place on the sceptre of the Incas as the eagle on the sceptre of the Emperor of Germany or Russia. Whales and sharks were also worshipped by the people who lived near the sea.

But in all this nature and animal worship it is difficult to detect a totemic origin.[1] The basis of totemism is the idea of blood-kinship with an animal or plant, which idea in the course of generations evolves into an exaggerated respect, and finally (under conditions favourable for development) into a full-blown mythology. At first it would appear as if the perfect organisation of the Peruvian state and its peculiar marriage laws had originated in a condition of totemism; but had totemism ever entered into the constitution of the Peruvian religion at any period of its development, it would have left as deep an impression upon it as it did in the case of the Egyptian religion—that is, some of the more important deities would have betrayed a totemic origin. That they betray an origin wholly naturalistic there is no room for doubt. And

[1] The veneration of an animal or plant *which does not identify a tribe* is not 'totemism' but 'naturalism,' or nature-worship.

here the root difference between the Mexican and Peruvian mythologies may be pointed out—that although both systems had grown up from various constituents grouping themselves around the central worship of the Sun, the constituents of the Aztec religion were almost wholly totemic, whereas those of the Peruvian religion were naturalistic.[1]

But the factor of fetishism was not wanting in the construction of the Peruvian religion. All that was sacred, from the sun himself to the tomb of a righteous person, was *Huaca*, or sacred. The chief priest of Cuzco was designated Huacapvillac, or 'he who speaks with sacred beings,' but the principal use to which the term *Huaca* was put was in reference to objects of metal, wood, and stone, which cannot be better described than as closely resembling those African fetishes so common in our museums. These differed considerably in size. The reverence for them was probably of prehistoric origin, and in this cultus

[1] The evidence of Garcilasso would seem to show that the early Peruvians possessed a totem-system; this, however, would appear to have been by some process totally eliminated. It will be seen that I differentiate between 'naturalism' and 'totemism.' 'Totemism' is the adoption of an animal or plant symbol by a *tribe* originally for the purpose of identification. It later grows into the belief in blood-kinship with the symbol. 'Naturalism' is the worship of the wind, the sun, or other natural phenomena.

we have the second brother whom Pirrhua Manca changed into a stone. They were believed by the Peruvians to be the veritable dwelling-places of spirits. Many of these Huacas were public property, and had gifts of flocks of llamas dedicated to them. The majority, however, were private property.

It will be necessary to mention one more deity. This is Supay, god of the dead, who dwelt in a dreary underworld. He was the Pluto of Peruvian mythology, and is usually portrayed as an open-mouthed monster of voracious appetite, into whose maw are thrown the souls of the departed.

For the study of the worship of old Peru the materials are less plentiful than in the case of the Mexican mythology. Stratum upon stratum of belief is discovered, like those in the ruins of some ancient city where each yard of earth holds the story of a dynasty. To the student of comparative religion an exhaustive study of the complex mythology of the ancient Peruvians offers an almost unparalleled opportunity for comparison with and elucidation of other mythologies, since in it the process of its evolution is exhibited with greater clearness than in the case of any other belief, ancient or modern.

CHAPTER V

PERUVIAN RITUAL AND WORSHIP

With the Peruvians, as with the Mexicans, paradise was a preserve of the aristocrats. The poor might languish in the gloomy shades of the Hades presided over by Supay, Lord of the Dead, but for the Incas and their immediate relatives, by whom was embraced the entire nobility, the Mansions of the Sun were retained, where they might dwell with the Sun, their father, in undisturbed felicity. In a community where everything was ordered with military exactitude, sin meant disobedience, and consequently death. Indeed it took the form of direct blasphemy against the Inca, and was thus stripped of the purely ethical sense it holds for a free population. The sinner expiated his crime at once, and was consigned to the grey shades of the underworld, there to pass the same nebulous existence as his more meritorious companions. Some writers upon Peru refer to a belief on the part of the

people in a place of retribution where the wicked would expiate their offences by ages of arduous toil. But there is little ground for the acceptance of these statements.

Strictly speaking, there was no priesthood in Peru. The ecclesiastical caste consisted of the Inca and his relatives, who were also known as Incas. These assumed all the principal positions in the national religion, but were unable, of course, to fill all the lesser provincial posts. These were undertaken by the priests of the local deities, who were at the same time priests of the imperial deities, a policy which permitted the conquered peoples to retain their own form of worship, and at the same time led them to recognise the paramountcy of the religion of the Incas. Nothing could be more intense than the devotion shown by all ranks of the population to the person of the Inca. He was the sun incarnate upon earth, and his presence must be entered with humble mien and beggarly apparel, and a further show of humility must also be made by carrying a bundle upon the back.

The High Priest, who has been already alluded to as holding the title of Huacapvillac, or 'He who converses with divine beings!" also held the more general one of Villac Oumau, or 'Chief

Sacrificer.' He derived his position solely from the Inca, but made all inferior appointments, and was answerable to the monarch alone. He was invariably an Inca of exalted rank, as were all the priests who officiated at Cuzco, the capital. Only those ecclesiastics of the higher grades wore any distinguishing garb, the lower order dressing in the same manner as the people.

The existence of a Peruvian priest was an arduous one. It was necessary for him to master a ritual as complex as any ever evolved by a hierarchy. At regular intervals he was relieved by his fellow-priests, who were organised in companies, each of which took duty for a specified period of the day or night. The duties of the Peruvian priesthood, whilst even more exacting than that of the Mexican, did not appear to have been lightened in a similar manner by the acquirement of knowledge, or by mental exercise of any description, and this may be partly accounted for by the fact that the art of writing was discouraged among them, probably on the assumption that the whole duty of man culminated in unfailing obedience to the Inca and his representatives, and that the acquirement of further knowledge was the work of supererogation.

It is deeply interesting to notice (isolated as was everything Peruvian) that it was in this far corner of America that the native evolution of the temple took place, as distinguished from the altar or teocalli. Originally the Peruvian priesthood had adopted that pyramidal form of structure now familiar to us as that in use by the Mexicans, but as time went on they began to roof over these high altars, and this practice at length culminated in the erection of huge temples like that at Cuzco.

The great temple of Cuzco, known as *Coricancha*, or 'The Place of Gold,' was the greatest and most magnificent example of Peruvian ecclesiastical architecture. The exterior gave an impression of massiveness and solidity rather than of grace. Round the outer circumference of the building ran a frieze of the purest gold, and the interior was profusely ornamented with plates of the same metal. The doorways were formed from huge monoliths, and the whole aspect of the building was Cyclopean. In the dressing of stone and the fitting of masonry the Peruvians were expert, and the placing of immense blocks of stone appears to have had no difficulties for them. So accurately indeed were these fitted that the blade of a knife could not be inserted between them. Inside

the Temple of the Sun was placed a great plate of gold, upon which was engraved the features of the god of the luminary, and this was so placed that the rays of the rising sun fell full upon it, and bathed it in a flood of radiance. The scintillations from a thousand gems, with which its surface was enriched, lent to it a brilliance which eye-witnesses declare to have been almost insupportable. Enthroned around this dazzling object were the mummified bodies of the monarchs of the Inca dynasty, giving to the place an air of holy mystery which must have deeply impressed the pious and simple people. The roof was composed of rafters of choice woods, but was merely covered in by a thatching of maize straw. The principle of the arch had never been thoroughly grasped by the Peruvians, and that of adequate roofing appears to have been equally unknown to them.

Surrounding this, the principal temple, were others dedicated to the moon; Cuycha, the rainbow; Chasca, the planet Venus; the Pleiades; and Catequil, the thunder-god. In that of the moon, the mother of the Incas, a plate of silver, similar to that which represented the face of the sun in his own sanctuary, was placed, and was surrounded by the mummified forms of the dead

queens of the Incas. In that of Cuycha, the rainbow, as already explained, a golden representation of the arch of heaven was to be found, and the remaining buildings in the precincts of the great temple were set apart for the residences of the priests.

The most ancient of the temples of Peru was that on the island of Titicaca, to which extraordinary veneration was paid. Everything in connection with it was sacred in the extreme, and in the surrounding maize-fields was annually raised a crop which was distributed among the various public granaries, in order to leaven the entire crop of the country with sanctity.

All the utensils in use in these temples were of solid gold and silver. In that of Cuzco twelve large jars of silver held the sacred grain, and censers, ewers, and even the pipes which conducted the water-supply through the earth to the temple, were of silver. In the surrounding gardens, the hoes, spades, and other implements in use were also of silver, and hundreds of representations of plants and animals executed in the precious metals were to be found in them. These facts are vouched for by numerous eye-witnesses, among whom was Pedro Pizarro himself, and subsequent historians have seen no reason to

regard their descriptions as in any way untrustworthy.

As in Mexico, so in Peru, the Spanish conquerors were astonished to find among the religious customs of the people practices which appeared to them identical with some of the sacraments of the Roman Catholic faith. Among these were confession, communion, and baptism. Confession appears to have been practised in a somewhat loose and irregular manner, but penance for ill-doing was apportioned, and absolution granted. At the festival of Raymi, which we will later examine, bread and wine were distributed in much the same manner as that prescribed in Christian communities. Baptism also was practised. Some three months after birth the child was plunged into water after having received its name. The ceremony, however, appears to have partaken more of the nature of an exorcism of evil spirits than of a cleansing from original sin.

Like the ancient Egyptians, the Peruvians practised the art of embalming the dead, but it does not appear that they did so with any idea in view of corporeal resurrection as did the former. As to the method by which they preserved the remains of the dead, authorities

are not agreed, some believing that the cold of the mountains to which the corpses were subjected was sufficient to produce a state of mummification, and others that a process akin to that of the Ancient Egyptians was gone through.

Burnt offerings were very popular among the Peruvians. They were chiefly made to the sun, and were, in general, not unlike those made by the Semites.

As with the Mexicans, the sacred dance was a striking feature of the Peruvian religion. These choral dances were brought to a very high state of perfection, and in the case of the common people were often wild and full of the fire of abandoned fanaticism. The Incas, however, possessed a dance of their own, which was sufficiently grave and stately. At great festivals two choral dances and hymns were rendered to the sun, each strophe of which ended with the cry of *Hailly*, or 'triumph.' Some of those Peruvian hymns were preserved in the work of a Spanish composer, who in 1555 wrote a mass, into the body of which he introduced these curious waifs of American melody. That choral dances are still in favour with the aborigines of Peru is proved by the evidence of Baron Eland

Nordenskjöld, who arrived (August 1907) from an eight months' ethnological expedition to some of the Andes tribes. He states that the 'so-called civilised Indians—the Quichuas and Aymaras—living around Titicaca . . . have retained many customs unaltered or but slightly modified since the time of the Incas. . . . Thus it was found that the Indians often worship Christ and the Virgin Mary by dances, in which the sun is used as the symbol for Christ, and the moon for the Virgin Mary.'

With the Peruvians each month had its appropriate festival. The solstices and equinoxes were of course the occasions of the most remarkable of these, and four times a year the feast of Raymi or the dance was celebrated with all the pomp and circumstance of which this strange and bizarre civilisation was capable. The most important of these was held in June, when nine days were given up to the celebration of the Citoc Raymi, or gradually increasing sun. For three days previous to this event all fasted, and no fire might be kindled in any house. On the fourth great day the Inca, accompanied in procession by his court and the people, who followed *en masse*, proceeded to the great square to hail the rising sun. The scene must have been one of intense brilliance. Clad in their

most costly robes, and sheltered beneath canopies of cunning feather-work in which the gay plumage of tropical birds was æsthetically arranged, the vast crowd awaited the rising of the sun in eager silence. When he came, shouts of joy and triumph broke from the multitude, and the cries of delight were swelled by the crash of wild melody from a thousand instruments. Louder and louder arose the joyous tumult, until topping the eastern mountains the luminary shone in full splendour on his worshippers. The riot of sound culminated in a mighty pæan of thanksgiving. Libations of maguey, or maize-spirit, were made to the deity, after first having touched the sacred lips of the Inca. Then marshalling itself once more in order of procession, all pressed with one accord to the golden Temple of the Sun, where black llamas were sacrificed, and a new fire kindled by means of a concave mirror. Divested of their sandals the Inca and his suite spent some time in prayer. Occasionally a human victim—a maiden or a beautiful child—was offered up in sacrifice, but happily this was a rare occurrence, and only took place on great public occasions, such as a coronation, or the celebration of a national victory. These sacrifices never ended in cannibal feasts, as did those of the Aztecs.

Grain, flowers, animals, and aromatic gums were the usual sacrificial offerings of the Peruvians.

The Citua Raymi was the festival of the spring, and fell in September. It was known as the Feast of Purification. The country must be purified from pestilence, and to secure this, round cakes, kneaded in the blood of children, were eaten. To secure this blood the children were merely bled above the nose, and not slaughtered, as with the more ferocious Aztecs—almost an example of the substitution of the part for the whole. These cakes were also rubbed upon the doorways, and the people smeared them all over their bodies as a preventive against disease. The circuit of the state of Cuzco was then made by relays of armed Incas, who planted their spears on the boundaries as talismans against evil. A torchlight procession followed, after which the torches were cast into the river as symbolic of the destruction of evil spirits.

The festival of the Aymorai, or harvest, fell in May, when a statue made of corn was worshipped under the name of Pirrhua, who seems to be an admixture of Manco Capac and Viracocha in his rôle of fertiliser. The fourth great festival, Capac Raymi, fell in December, when the thunder-god shared the honours paid to the Sun. It was then

that the younger generation of Incas after a vigorous training received an honour equivalent to that of knighthood.

The Peruvians possessed a fully developed conventual system. A number of maidens, selected for their beauty and their birth, were dedicated to the deity as 'Virgins of the Sun.' Under the guidance of *mamacones*, or matrons, these maidens were instructed in the nature of their religious duties, which chiefly consisted in the weaving of priestly garments and temple-hangings. They also watched over the sacred fire which had been kindled at the feast of Raymi. No communication with the outside world was permitted to them, and detection in a love-affair meant living burial, the execution of the lover, and the entire destruction of the place of his birth. In the convent of Cuzco were lodged between one and two thousand maidens of the royal blood, and at a marriageable age these became brides of the Sun in his incarnate shape of the Inca, the most beautiful being selected for the harem of the monarch.

Sorcery and divination were frequently employed by the Peruvians, and the *Huacarimachi*, 'They who make the gods speak,' were held in great veneration by the ignorant masses. The oracles in the valleys of Lima and Rimac were

much resorted to, and auguries of all descriptions were in popular favour.

The Peruvians were ignorant of morality as we appreciate the term. That they were, however, a most moral people there is every evidence. But as has been before pointed out, all crime was a direct offence against the majesty of the Inca, who, as viceroy of the Sun on earth, had been blasphemed by the breaking of his law. Under such a régime the true significance of sin was bound to be obscured, if not altogether lost. Terror took the place of conscience, and the necessity for implicit obedience gave no scope to the true moral sense—probably to the detriment of the entire community.

The political and religious history of Peru is unique in the annals of mankind, and its study offers a startling instance of what prolonged isolation may work in the mind of man. That the Peruvian mind, isolated in a remote part of the world as it was, was never wholly blind to the existence of a great and beneficent creative Power, the degradation of a cramping theocracy notwithstanding, is triumphant proof that the knowledge of that Power is a thing inalienable from the mind of man.

CHAPTER VI

THE QUESTION OF FOREIGN INFLUENCE UPON THE RELIGIONS OF AMERICA

THE space at my disposal for dealing with this most difficult of all questions is such as will enable me only to outline its salient points. As I pointed out at the beginning of the first chapter, the question of the origins of the American religions was almost identical with that of the origins of the American race itself.

That the Red Man was not the aboriginal inhabitant of the American continent, but supplanted a race with Eskimo affinities, is extremely probable. At all events, the 'Skraelings,' with whom the early Norse discoverers of America had dealings, were not described by them as in any way resembling the North American Indian of later times. If this be granted—and Indian folklore would seem to strengthen the hypothesis—we must then find some other home for the

Red Man than the prairies of North-east America for the five centuries between the Norse and Columbian discoveries. He may, of course, have dwelt in the north-west of the continent, a solution of the problem which appears to me highly feasible. That his affinities are Mongolian it would be absurd to dispute; but—and this is of supreme importance—these affinities are of so archaic an origin as to preclude all likelihood of any important or numerous Asiatic immigration occurring for many centuries before either the Norse or Columbian discovery.

Coming to a period within the ken of history, there is just the possibility that Mexico, or some adjacent country of Central America, was visited by Asiatic Buddhist priests in the fifth century. The story is told in the Chinese annals of the wanderings of five Buddhist priests, natives of Cabul, who journeyed to America (which they designate Fusang) *viâ* the Aleutian Islands and Kamchatka, a region then well known to the Chinese. Their description of the country, however, is no more convincing than are the arguments of their protagonist, Professor Fryer of San Francisco, who sees Asiatic influence in various elephant-headed gods and Buddha-esque statuary in the National Mexican Museum. It

cannot be too strongly insisted upon that any foreign influence arriving in the American continent in pre-Columbian times was not sufficiently powerful to have more than a merely transitory influence upon the customs or religious beliefs of the inhabitants.

This leads us to the conclusion that the religions of Mexico and Peru were of indigenous origin. Any attempt to prove them offshoots of Chinese or other Asiatic religion on the basis of a similarity of art or custom is doomed to failure.

But however satisfactory it may be to brush aside unsubstantial theories which aspire to the honour of facthood, it would be a thousand pities to ignore the numerous intensely interesting myths which have grown up round the idea of foreign contact with the American races in pre-Columbian times. Let us briefly examine these, and attempt to discover any point of contact between them and similar American myths.

I have previously alluded to the myth of Quetzalcoatl. Quetzalcoatl was a Mexican deity, but in reality he was one of the older pre-Aztecan gods of Anahuac. He is sometimes represented as a being of white complexion and fair-bearded, with blue eyes, and altogether of European appearance. It will be remembered that on the

entrance into Anahuac of Tezcatlipoca he waged a war with that god in which he was worsted, and eventually forced to depart for 'Tlapallan' in a canoe, promising to return at some future date. It will also be recollected how the legend of Quetzalcoatl's return influenced the whole of Montezuma's policy towards the Spanish conquistadores, and how the fear of his vengeance was ever before the Aztec priesthood. Quetzalcoatl, strangely enough, was reputed to have sailed for 'Tlapallan' from almost the identical spot first set foot upon by Cortes on his arrival on the Mexican coast.

The Max Müller school of mythologists see nothing in Quetzalcoatl but a god of the wind. With them Minos was a myth. So was his palace with its labyrinth until its recent discovery at Knossos. I am fain to see in Quetzalcoatl a real personality—a culture-hero; but I will suggest nothing concerning his non-American nationality. At the same time it will be interesting to examine, firstly, those European myths which speak of men who set out for America; and, secondly, those American myths which speak of the existence of 'white men,' or 'white tribes,' dwelling upon the American continent.

Passing over the sagas of the Norse discovery

of America, which are by no means mythical, we come to the Celtic story of the finding of the great continent. When the Norsemen drove the Irish Celts from Iceland, these fugitives sought refuge in 'Great Ireland,' by which, it is supposed, is intended America. The Irish *Book of Lismore* tells of the voyage of St. Brandan, abbot of Cluainfert in Ireland, to an island in the ocean destined for the abode of saints, and of his numerous discoveries during a seven years' cruise. The Norse sagas which tell of this 'Great Ireland' speak of the language of its inhabitants as 'resembling Irish,' but as the Irish were the nation with which the Norsemen were best acquainted, this 'resemblance' appears to smack of the linguistic classification of the British sailorman who applies the term 'Portugee' to all languages not his own. The people of this country were attired in white dresses, 'and had poles borne before them on which were fastened lappets, and who shouted with a loud voice.'

But another Celtic people claimed the honour of first setting foot upon American soil. The Welsh Prince Madoc in the year 1170 sailed westwards with a fleet of several ships, and coming to a large and fertile country, landed one hundred and twenty men. Returning to Wales

he once more set out with ten vessels, but concerning his further adventures Powell and Hakluyt are silent. Nor does the authority of the bard Meredith ap Rees concerning him rest upon any more substantial basis.[1] Stories of Welsh-speaking Indians, too, are not uncommon. Two slaves whom the Norsemen of 1007 sent on a foraging expedition into the interior of Massachusetts were Scots, although their names—Haki and Hakia—hardly sound Celtic.[2]

Innumerable are the legends of 'white Indians'—the 'white Panis,'[3] dwelling south of the Missouri, the 'Blanco Barbus, or white Indians with beards,' the Boroanes, the Guatosos of Costa Rica, the Malapoques in Brazil, the Guaranies in Paraguay, the Guiacas of Guiana, the Scheries of La Plata—but modern anthropology scarcely bears out the stories of the 'whiteness' of these tribes. On a similar footing are the travellers' tales concerning the existence of Indian Jews—to prove which Lord Kingsborough squandered a fortune and compiled a work on Mexican antiquities the parallel of

[1] The legend is the basis of some hundred of lines of bookish fustian by Southey, who follows Hakluyt in making Mexico the theatre of the prince's adventures.

[2] *Antiquitates Americanæ.* Were they Picts?

[3] Pawnees.

which has not been known in the entire history of bibliography.[1]

More convincing are the Mexican and Peruvian legends concerning the appearance of white and bearded culture-bringers. These legends are, it must be admitted, shadowy enough, but are so persistent and resemble each other so closely as to give some grounds for the supposition that at some period in the history of Mexico or Peru a member or members of the 'Caucasian' race may have stumbled into these civilisations through the accidents of shipwreck. But it is exceedingly dangerous to premise anything of the sort; and, as has been said before, the influence of such wanderers could only have been infinitesimal.

Enough, then, has been said to show that the origins of the religions of Mexico and Peru could not have been of any other than an indigenous nature. Their evolution took place wholly upon American soil, and if resemblances appear in their systems to the mythologies or religions of

[1] This monumental work, which, apart from its letterpress, is exceedingly valuable in respect of numerous splendid plates representing Aztec MSS., is in nine huge volumes, and was published in London in 1831. Its original price was £175 coloured, and £120 uncoloured. Its noble author sought to prove that the Mexicans were the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel.

Asia, they are explicable by that law now so well known to anthropologists and students of comparative religion, that, given similar circumstances, and similar environments, the evolution of the religious beliefs of widely separated peoples will proceed upon similar lines.

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The works of Prescott upon Mexico and Peru (which are perhaps the most popular and accessible upon the antiquities of these countries) are nevertheless sadly meagre in their accounts of the respective mythologies of the Nahuatlaca and the Incas. Indeed in each of them but a few pages is given to the faith of the aborigines. In some later editions, however (notably in the recent popular editions of Mr. Sonnenschein), excellent variorum notes have been added by the editors. A great deal of Prescott's work is now quite obsolete and misleading. The works of Mr. Brinton have superseded them ; but it is doubtful if Prescott will ever be surpassed in narrative charm. The best English work on the subject is Mr. Payne's *History of the New World called America,* cited above, a work which is a veritable storehouse of knowledge upon aboriginal America. These works are, however, rather too erudite in tone for the general reader, and by no means easy to come by. A most excellent catalogue of American historical and mythological literature is published by Mr. Karl Hiersemann of Leipsic.

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